The Charliad

BY

ROBERT B. HEILMAN

1973

The Charliad was first read on March 8, 1973, at a retirement party for President Charles Odegaard at the home of Dean George W. Beckmann of the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Washington.

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Remarks on the First Presentation of the Epic to a Learned Audience

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to present to you one of the major archaeological discoveries of the year 2500—a manuscript of an incomplete but very striking work of art. It is believed to be 600 years old. It was discovered in one of the great excavations of modern times. This took place in Seattle, Washington, at a site known as the Dump Digs—an exploration of an ancient, still rich, refuse disposal site adjacent to what is believed to have been the old grounds of the then University of Washington. In brief, this MS contains an extraordinary epic poem called *The Charliad*. To read it in its entirety would take several hours, so we will give you only a few excerpts. The subject of the poem appears to have been a hero of the time when the poem was composed—a strange phenomenon in what we know generally as The Unheroic Era. We know little more about the hero than that his name was Charles, and he seems to have had a position in the University. Some scholars think he was the athletic director, but others argue that this interpretation inflates his role.

Not much is known about the poet, whose name appears to have been Robert Heilman. There is some evidence that he also wrote under the name of Theodore Roethke, but some scholars point out that Roethke never attempted epic verse. Heilman was apparently well thought of in his time; at several places in the MS there is an editorial note, "Wild applause from the audience." He once refers to himself as a "minor hack," but doubtless he felt himself more than that. In scholarly devotion to truth I have to report that some modern critics regard him as only a malcontent poetaster entirely without heroic spirit.* But I would not present his work to this gifted audience were I not convinced that you will see something unusual in it.

Signed, SOLOMON KATZ XVIII
STATE PALAEOGRAPHER

*Even if the work is not entirely Homeric, it is remarkable to find even such a literary composition in the sub-period which our cultural historians call the Age of Audio-Visual Termination of Literacy.

The Charliad

C. E. O.

ARMA VIRUMQUE CANO AMICUM RECTOREMQUE MAGNIFICUM
SEMPER SATIS MAGNANIMUM UT IOCOS ET EXCIAT ET PATIATUR

Prologue

The Poet's Address to the Audience

Oh, captive audience! You I love!
The doors are locked. You cannot move.

Invocation

The Poet's Address to the Gods

I, epic poet, call upon the Spirits
To help develop my great riming merits.
The spirits know my prayer no silly fad;
They fill me for a sort of *Iliad*;
They sprinkle corn, they make me barley glad,
And ready now to sing a *Charliad.*

Canto I

Childhood and Early Youth

Yes, the intent is biographic,
To hail a hero with an epic.
I hope to drive my public gaga
With a western Norseman's saga.
But lest the audience resist me,
I'll eliminate prehistory.
Like heroes meant to challenge fate,
Our Charles would ripen rather late.
In many scenes he stayed a baby—
Chicago, Dartmouth, Harvard, Navy;
Fate made his infancy last long
To let his voice grow big and strong;
Before folks let him walk the town
'Tis said that he could talk them down.
At last he grew a Peck's bad boy;
'Twas at Urbana, Illinois,
That he began his life's career
Of setting schoolmen on their ear.
He questioned old authority,
And worse, he joined AAUP.
Oh what a reckless puberty!
That fountain of eternal youth
He swilled and loved its simple truth:
We know what's wrong, *we* need not hunt,
The trouble always lies up front.
We are the day, up there the night:
We faculty are always right.
For who could know as much as we,
And lack infallibility—
In verity, morality?
In policy, integrity?
In every kind of quality?
Some say this period left its mark,
But records leave us in the dark.
Did youthful fling implant a germ,
That causes symptoms every term?
Does Charles, AAUP alumnus,
Escape from all front-office numbness?
Or knowing they can ne'er be wrong,
Command the profs to write his song,

And with their wisdom make him strong?
The inner facts I cannot tell,
But this I know and know right well:
Of those AAUP lieutenants,
Charles has done severest penance,
Suffering the gang's displeasure
With every presidential measure.
E'en when he served as profs' go-getter
And hammered off a fiscal fetter,
They swore that they could do it better.
But let's not stress our boy's mistake,
For which his older heart would ache,
But move ahead with tale alluring
Of Charles' professional maturing.

For him the years of adolescence
Were almost all ACLS's.
'Twas here he felt the sweet success
Of one who ladles out largesse,
And oh, the still intenser pleasure
Of managing a two-way treasure,
The power—for some of us, alack!—
To dish it out and take it back.
The poet Heilman, minor hack,
Soon found himself upon the rack
Of fiscal insecurity,
When Charles checked out the purity
Of some committee in the west,
Of humanists, the very best,
Who met at noble spas and spots
To sup and sip, with highest thoughts
Of many humanistic sorts.
ACLS had paid the freight
Till Charles arrived to set them straight.
He questioned all the western gang,
“Does all your thinking and its tang
Get back to campi whence you sprang?”
“Oh no, good god,” we cried, “that’s banned;
The campi wouldn’t understand
Our thinking, which is rather grand.”
“Sluggards!” cried Charles, “Retreatists, lazy,
Self-indulgent, loafers, hazy,
Failed as missionaries, sleazy
Oafs who spend my dough like crazy!
Since all your life is one big tort,

I hereby cancel all support."
Thus he learned the double smack:
Dished it out, and took it back.
The busting of our beanery
Prepared him for a deanery:
It showed he'd learned the tricky ropes
To be a dean at Michigan,
To be a dean at Michigan,
To be a dean at Michigan.
E'er since that age he's lived in hopes
That all would be like that again,
So brave and true and rich again,
Like Michigan, like Michigan.

Alas—but I anticipate.
I must go back to earlier date
When he became the strong young man
Who got his growth at Michigan,
Became a torrid epic hero
Who never heard of thermal zero,
But seized a life so passional
It made him quite irrational.
Who would have thought this sober lad
Could see a girl and go so mad?

Of course at Illinois he'd got a wife,
A trifling episode of private life,
A charming mistress of domestic art,
Who didn't sear his educator's heart
But left it free for crazy life-time whirl
When near Detroit he met a country girl.

Charles's Song of Love

strophe

My soul's in a fervor
For my darling Ann Arbor,
Oh sweetest Ann Arbor,
Delilah my barber,
Who cut off my hair,
A Samson quite bare;
Oh lovely Ann Arbor,

Oh you dear warbler,
Oh what a garber,
Oh what a harmer!
You sliced through my armor,
Cut me to bits,
Gave me fits,
Shook my wits,
Enchanting Ann Arbor,
You're my own Greta Garbo.

ANTISTROPHE

Despite her allure,
Ann wasn't quite pure;
I wouldn't endure,
So I had to cure
Her disorders.
As recorders
Will tell,
I did well,
Took infinite trouble,
Toiled at the double.
Out of love I picked at her,
Kicked at her,
Whipped her
And tripped her,
Roared "Lady be good,"
And she sobbed that she would.
Then I screamed at her;
In short, I redeemed her.

EPODE

That new-made soul
I worshipped whole,
My newly ripe,
My archetype;
My model
To cuddle;
My own idea,
My Galatea.
For her own good

I'd roasted her;
For others' good
I've toasted her,
And still boast of her;
I've anointed her,
And I point to her.
For joy at night I dream of her,
And hope for more esteem of her
From others: may you gleam like her,
Get steam from her,
Get on the beam like her,
Have a team like her,
Straighten your seams like her,
Whip your cream like her.
Oh, Anna,
Hosanna.

Too hot the flame; there came a day,
They had to send our Charles away—
A therapeutic rustication
To inaccessible location,
Asylum in the distant west,
A place for cure, though not for rest.
He ne'er forgot his early passion,
But tales of her in time he'd ration:
We found that after fifteen years
She came but weekly* to our ears.

*This is a scholarly emendation of the manuscript, where the word is weakly. Weakly must be a scribal error, in view of the widely attested vocal powers of the hero Charles.

Canto II

The Washington Experience

At Washington he found a new affair,
A different kind of woman in his hair:
This time no country lass to shake the throne,
Instead a somewhat aged urban crone,
She said she'd lived, or would, a thousand years,
And none need try to change her well-worn gears.
Charles thought, "How can I pierce that cranium,
So full of dreams of some millennium,
When she can crash in one biennium?
I'll have to try to pierce that leathery brow,
And call to life her sense of here and now."

At first he tried a lyric note to stir this alma mater;
He cried "Come on, get going, girl, we'll pay the piper later."
He pirouetted, gamboled, danced, a dazzling figure-skater;
A teasing young seducer, he would try to make her cater
To all his whims, to yield to him, a prestidigitator.
She said, "I see, you have to be a marvelous debater,
And yet, my dear, you make me fear, I'm married to a satyr.
You want that I begin to do the oddest kinds of things,
Be ready for a change of style whene'er the doorbell rings,
And sing and dance and jig and prance for cottagers and kings,
While you look on and cheer and leer from managerial wings.
But I'm a stable woman, and I cannot play such tricks;
I stay myself, you play your games, with those I never mix."

Now we must lose the lilting tone
And choose a heavy-metered moan
To tell of Charles's midriff groan
On finding girl friend stiff and rigid
And slow to change and very frigid,
And set in ways which all were wrong,
And hard of hearing to his song.
But hero true, he found new zest
And tried new ways to clean the nest.

He blushed at the problems that everywhere grew,
And called to his mind a dive or a stew:
Curriculum, teaching—he couldn't repress
His feeling that both were a horrible mess;

No general instruction, the A & S rule;
The faculty turned from their studies to pool;
The honors, if any, unimplementized;
The library wholly unMichiganized.
He thought, "Though there's much that I have to endure,
There's nothing a covey of leg-men can't cure."
So quickly, before we awoke from our sleeps,
He burnished the staff with a dozen new veeps;
Alas, it but gave us a case of the creeps.
The veeps, though they shone, couldn't alter our spots;
Our hero confessed, "I must try some new plots;
I'll fight against vice at its natural level,
And search for a dean who isn't a devil;
With courage I'll fling evangelical darts
At first at the evil old College of Arts;
If Hercules efforts can cleanse such a sty,
Then saving the rest is just eating some pie."

To turn the college Odegaard,
He sought a brave and new old guard.
He said, "I need an agent now,
A dean to listen and to bow."
That spring his fancy turned to Sol;
He said, "You're it, no fol de rol;
Don't think that things can not go well,
For all you need to do, I'll tell.
Next month, the first, you start my rule."
'Twas March. Some voice said, "April Fool."
A voice above, or some diabolist's,
Or some nearby ventriloquist's?
In April, Sol became the sun;
By May, Charles cried, "What have I done?"
No revolution was begun.
He said, "I talk, and hint, and swear,
I lecture, order, and declare,
But Sol seems somehow not to hear;
I'll get antennae for his ear—
Or better, plant him by my knee,
To listen, nod, and maybe see
What makes a university.
With daily lectures, two or three,
I'll soften his perversity."
So Sol advanced to higher state,
But kept a lowly learner's fate,
Which future lines will explicate.

Charles tried again, with all his might,
And put the horse before the Cartwright,
But though the horse was pulling tight,
The Cart fell slowly out of sight;
It creaked and groaned and stayed the same;
It couldn't play the horse's game.
When could a Cart that's wright go wrong?
By putting on its brakes too long,
And going north instead of south,
Despite the words from horse's mouth.
You know, of course, the horse was Norse,
His efforts made the Norse get hoarse.
The Norse was grieved because the College
Could never seem to use his knowledge;
Though he could kick and shove and nudge it,
He swore because he couldn't budge it.
Because he so loved A & S,
Its deans all gave him great distress,
In fact such endless nagging pain
He had to send them down the drain.
But oops! It wasn't down they went;
Instead they made a strange ascent.
To rescue Sciences and Arts,
Charles moved the deans to higher parts,
Kicked them up the leader's ladder,
Maybe wiser, maybe sadder;
He felt no fear of ruination
Of the top administration:
They couldn't harm that upper air,
For he could always watch them there.

In other colleges, the same,
The squadron leaders always lame;
'Twas torpor and chicanery
In each unwashed decanery.
Charles kicked these sergeants in the jeans,
And turned them into jelly deans.
He had them meeting every day
To learn his managerial way.
He said he'd have no talking back;
They feared to talk at all, alack.
They aped invisibility,
Each praying, "Please don't call on me."
The reason was—in half a stanza—

Not one of them e'er knew the answer.
"This crowd will never help," he said,
"I'll go still lower seeking aid,
And scrape the bottom of the barrel,
The boys from lectern and from carrel.
The faculty may not be bright,
But I can try to steer them right,
And see if I can make them plan
To shape the place like Michigan."
The faculty were soon a-quaking,
On sensing Charles's undertaking,
And yet they didn't act like rabbits,
So firm they clung to ancient habits.
To counteract their sleeping potion,
Charles tried a thousand kinds of motion.
He turned in all directions, called,
Implored, anointed, and installed,
Committeed, ordered, shoved, and hauled,
Directed, anguished, coaxed, and bawled,
Challenged, struggled, and complained,
Denounced, exploded, then explained,
Wheedled, kicked, shed tears, and roared,
Tickled, slapped, and often gored,
Lectured, pulled and pushed, and urged,
Nonstop nagged, corrected, purged,
Belabored, mocked, and even sneered,
Pressured, roweled, nicked, and whipped,
Grumbled, carped, and snapped, and nipped.
Then paused in incredulity,
Exclaimed, "My god, it cannot be,
That men can have such lethargy;
Two score and seven verbs of action,
And not a single ounce of traction."

The prevalent vices remained undiminished,
Agenda all loaded with bizness unfinished.
For making my mark it is clear what to do:
I'll call on new methods for changing the U.
I happen to have about four in my pocket,
One after another to shoot like a rocket.

METHOD 1: HIGH THOUGHT

Oh men, who think the world is eerie,
And of the practical are leery,
I offer you the purest theory,
I hope 'twill make you slightly beery.
I explicate the medieval,
The university primeval;
I urge you, let it be your model,
Just try to get it through your noddle;
'Twill help you solve your frightful muddle.
From those great days of high design
You've—er, we've had a great decline.
Their experts were quadrivial,
But surely ours are trivial,
Excessively convivial;
They struggled with the trivium,
We loaf in our lascivium.
If you will really modern be,
Just try this medievalry;
Adopt a measure really drastic,
Feel and think as if monastic.
Adjust your collars,
Worship all scholars,
Forget the dollars.

But why those hollers?
Oh well, without much more ado,
I'll move to method number two.

METHOD 2: DELUSIVE POWER

"The men of sciences and arts
Are all dictators in their hearts;
To get their work and loyalty,
I'll let them share my royalty,
Make each of them a kind of czar
To gorge himself on naked power,
And rise above life's nitty-gritty,
And conquering march, a Walter Mitty,
As chairman of a big committee."
Before we'd even briefed our wives,
Plan number two controlled our lives.

One thing was rather humorous:
Because we were so numerous,
Charles had to find a thousand jobs,
Lest some should seem neglected slobs.
But he could dream a thousand needs,
And make committees grow like weeds.
Ten thousand pages of reports
From chairmen who became cohorts
Of Charles the master of the show,
Filled miles of shelving, row by row.
This led a freak to write a ditty,
And others would indite graffiti.

MURAL VERSE REFLECTING HISTORY

1

Our leader never pities us,
But merciless, committees us.

2

Committees sit, committees stand;
He finds the ad hoc type are grand
To stir the profs who seem too bland.
He says, "I really can provoke 'em
By dosing them with this ad hoc-um.
Besides, it uses energy
That might go into deviltry."

3

Interlude in an Irish Mode

Said the handsome Exec from Chicago,
"I practice the art of slick ad hoc
Committees for all;
They slave till they fall,
Their reports straight into me drawer go."

He almost won by number two design:
We were committeed partly into line,
And then to strengthen his security,
He quick invoked his method number three.

He kept us all uncertain what tomorrow's score would be
So that we never could relax in bland security;
You had to be a prophet with extraordinary eyes,
To guess his next pronouncement, and the job he'd emphasize.
One day he'd cry our duty was to slave for undergrads,
A second day he'd warmly push for higher-minded fads.
And then he'd tell another crowd it was an awful pity,
We did so little work to please the region and the city.
And then again he'd prophesy decline and great regressions
If we did not spend all our time improving all professions.
(I'm sure he mainly meant the men with lancet and with pills;
They got so good the rest of us could hardly pay our bills.)
At last his greatest triumph, this leering perturbator;
Whom did he love? The pedagogue? Or prize investigator?
For half the time he'd charge we'd left our classes in the lurch;
The other half he'd threaten us: why don't you do research?
We dashed in all directions, felt a hot anxiety:
To get the student rating or the bibliography?
He'd tell a crowd, the teachers are the ones I really cherish,
And then assure another mob, they'll publish or they'll perish.
He chuckled, "Keep them guessing how the wind of favor blows,
For that's the way to keep them off their rears and on their toes."

This method fine
Got us in line.
We didn't know
Where he would go;
We lost our ease
And tried to please
Lest we be left
Behind, bereft
Of what it takes
For ale and cakes.
He saw us waver,
Began to savor
Our surrender.
But to render
It better
This go-getter
Would enhance it,
Not chance it,
But beat us down
To the last clown
With fearsome news.

He said, "I'll use
One tactic more:
My method four."

METHOD 4: THIRD-DEGREE FINALE

He thought, I've tried to make them parrots
With triple course of Nordic carrots
(A thin and pale and fibrous food
Deemed good enough for such a brood),
And now my last triumphal trick
Of training them: I'll use the stick.
They only cringe when I admonish,
So let them learn that I can punish.
In all things their assent to gain,
I have to use excessive pain;
Indeed to make them see the light,
I'll innovate in Schrecklichkeit.
Attend me now, as I reveal
How well I brought this gang to heel.
Of all the penalties for crime
That help reform our modern time,
'Twas I devised the very sorest:
I packed them off to grim Pack Forest.
A three-day sentence in those woods,
Produced all kinds of moral goods;
All rebels sent to this Siberia
Whimpered, "Uncle, now we hear ya."
I caught them in a wicked crunch,
With never-ending one-two punch:
If they survived the day-time bores,
They wilted hearing all-night snores.
Twelve hours I slept in private room,
Dreamt belly-laughs at sinners' doom.
There's little more to say, you know;
All systems that I pushed were go.

And thus the epic tale of Charles and how he got control
Installed a system guaranteed to squeeze our life and soul.
It held for two biennia till the revolution came,
And Charles set out to bludgeon us to play a different game.

Canto III

Revolution

One of the saddest aspects of this archaeological find is the fragmentary nature of the canto (or cantos?) on the revolutionary period. Surely this rich time for genius could be expected to have elicited the poet's highest creativity. One theory is that Heilman was so distressed by this period that he lost all powers of composition in a continuous vein. Another theory is that rival poets were so discouraged by the brilliance of his lines that they destroyed the work that would always make them look second rate. Another theory is that agents of university libraries, greedy for spoil, stole this treasure hoard for their own collections, and that this canto (these cantos?) will still turn up in the secret archives at Buffalo, Texas, or some such unprincipled (but over-principaled) place. The only trouble with this theory is its failure to explain why they stole only a part of this great work. The mystery remains unsolved. For whatever reason, all we possess is fragmentary pieces of narrative, lyrics, epigrams, and graffiti reflecting this cardinal period in university history. Some of these represent the hero as speaking in his own voice.

fragment 1

If I could get them off their dimes
To know they live in modern times;
If I could get them off their duff,
Their games with very ancient stuff;
If they would open sleepy eyes
To know the students truly wise—
We'd get together in the Hub;
There'd be no academic rub.

fragment 2

I try to bring them up to date,
The one thing that they truly hate;
I say, "You've got to teach Vietnam,"
The foggy souls cry out, "Nyet." Damn.

fragment 3

Of course we've some who're only up to date,
For all of us a still more deadly fate.

fragment 4

He told the music man, that rock

Of ages, "You cannot go Bach.
Now hurry up and do not tease,
And find a relevant Three B's."
It made the music men all hop;
We soon had Bergsma, bungo, bop.

FRAGMENT 5

He tried to set the radicals upon the sinning deans,
But for this way of doing things they didn't care two beans.
They said, "Don't try to fuddle us, we must know where to look;
We cannot bother with a dean, he's nothing but a schnuck
In training for—but let it pass, we want a major crook.
"Ah ha," quoth Charles, "I see it now, you want department heads;
They are so strong and powerful they rarely hit their beds."
On hearing this, we chairmen shed a tear of ecstasy,
To learn what none had ever dreamed, that we had potency.
We'd always thought that we were mashed between two heavy stones;
Administrators up above, and faculty below
Relentlessly had pressured us and ground our very bones.
But now the radicals had found we practiced gross dictation,
And made the rules for all the moves in higher education,
So they arose to rectify an evil situation.
The students plus the tenureless advanced and grabbed for power,
And slugged us with the virtue that makes their faces dour.

While Charles sat gently smiling in his newly quiet tower.

FRAGMENT 6

Reform Song for a Coloratura Voice

The ancient color's out of date,
The halls I must redecorate
With a more chromatic cover.
I'll negrify,
I'll rougefy,
I'll brown the place all over;
And with coffee, tan, and yellow
Be a fashion-plated fellow.
My steps will turn the white man pale;
Our rainbow cannot ever fail.
I'll color and minoritize,
I'll blacken, orientalize,
And hyperpolyethnicize.

At last, to make the races gasp,
I'll quite unsting the master wasp.

FRAGMENT 7

The faculty tell me just what I should do
When we are attacked by a troublesome crew;
There's always a maddening paperish rattle
Of letters that give me the plan of the battle.
But oh when the bullhorns and barracks go up,
The faculty exit to sip and to sup;
When I have to face a crisis or slaughter,
The scholars are rushing for whiskey and water;
Or say I command, "You drink at your peril,"
They even may flee to a Suzzallo carrel,
Still leaving the president over the barrel.
If poets like Heilman would talk and not write,
We might get the radicals headed for flight;
Nor that his speeches would carry much weight.
But hearing his style—an unbearable fate.
The throwers of bombs have sensitive souls,
And arsonists wondrously civilized goals;
When they see we're too far from a bearable norm,
They'll pick a more promising school to reform.
As long as old Heilman conceals his bad being
That surely would send all reformers a-fleeing,
They cling to illusions of making corrections
And saving our souls with pure insurrections.

FRAGMENT 8

Songs of the Senate

(It is not clear whether these truly belong to the Revolutionary Canto, but a certain note of urgency suggests a crisis such as the Revolution.)

Senate Sings
However right that he may be,
We know that we are righter;
However wrong that he may be,
We know that we're unwronger.
If as he should he would admire us
We could cure his every virus.

We never have a thought of self;
We scorn materialistic pelf;
We'd always pay the highest price
To purge administrative vice.
Thank God we have no lust for power;
Instead we labor every hour,
To keep the U. from going sour.
Charles Sings
Oh, Senate, you're so full of virtue,
I ever fear I may besmirch you.
Lest I should cry I try to smile
At something in your weighty style;
Albeit rather sombrely,
You are a kind of comedy.
I don't suppose you really plan it,
But you're my own, my true Mack Senate;
Alas, without a bathing beauty,
But keystone cops on double duty,
Forever chasing over hill and
Dale a presidential villain.

FRAGMENT 9

(Fragment 9 seems clearly to stem from a Revolutionary experience. However, as is the way of artists dealing with history, the poet seems to have fused several historical experiences—probably the Revolution and the Depression which immediately followed it—in one extraordinary song of Presidential feeling and public disaster.)

The faculty all need my knife
To open up the facts of life.
They cannot see the danger near;
They think Olympia's but a beer.
I slave all year to shape them up,
And make them drink of wisdom's cup.
"If all of you don't soon get with it,
Then I must tell you, do not doubt it,
The state will see that we're without it."
Before this voice and this renown,
The whole economy bowed down
And brought about a paradox—
Anemia for goldilocks.
If you don't get it, let me tout it:
We're now both with it and without it.

Fourth and Final Canto

A Poetic Miscellany

(These materials were all found in the cache of rare papers at the Dump Digs. In subject matter they seem to be related to the *Charliad*, but we can only guess how the poet may have intended to integrate them into an ultimate structural whole. Many of them seem to represent the hero Charles speaking, in soliloquy or as if to an audience.)

ITEMS 1 AND 2

(Here the poet avers that he is simply recording graffiti that he discovered on the walls of the Presidential rest room.)

1. Whenever I appoint a new self-starter,
He soon begins to think himself a martyr.

2. They never could assimilate my truths historical;
What they deserve's a president of total unrecall.

ITEM 3

My higher office has some passing trouble
With men who want to live a life that's double;
Instead of listening all day to their betters,
Half time they spend in writing quippish letters.
I could be funny too if I half tried,
But if I joked and jested, who would guide?

ITEM 4

"I am not God," he oft would say;
This caused his hearers some dismay;
It made us mortals pessimistic
When voice divine was atheistic.

ITEM 5

A Crisis Duet in a Grave Measure

Sang Charles to Betty, "Something may be wrong.
I feel a sort of coating on my tongue;
I'm bushed and feverish and red of eye;
I know my voice is hoarse and throat is dry.
Of course my wind is strong despite my years,
And yet I lose control of others' ears.
Oh dear, what can the matter be, oh dear!"

And Betty sang a lullaby, "Don't fear;
I spot your state: a little bit at sea-uh;
Perhaps you got the bug in South Korea;
I think they call the ailment logorrhea.
I have a remedy called slowmotil;
'Twill quickly bring a feverish flux to heel.
You needn't swallow this to feel its grace;
You just apply it to the lower face—
A splendid sterile prophylactic sheath,
Beneficent for throat and mouth and teeth.
A simple thing, it's just a kind of rag;
In olden times 'twas quaintly called a gag;
On every day I order you to try it—
A guarantee of therapeutic quiet."

ITEMS 6 AND 7

Verses on Persons

(The poet attributes these gems to the hero Charles himself. This attribution appears to combine the poet's modesty and his admiration for his hero.)

6 Allendoerfer

There's a man who nips his betters
As he writes them biting letters;
I don't want a wag-tail time-server,
Just a slightly muzzled Allendoerfer.

The only way to get him off my toes
Was send his fighting spirit 'gainst our foes.
Said Charles to Carl, "I've thought a dozen hours,
How we can better use your many powers;
The hour is here; no longer can we skimp ya:
The place for all your talents is Olympia."

7 Roman

Though Herschel earns subsistence in genetics,
He had a second major in splenetics.
To save his own and several future ages,
At each administrator how he rages:
"You careless, needless Caesar, you don't suit us,
To save our show I'll be a Roman Brutus."
But when he drove all prexies to the dump,
His targets gone, he had an awful slump.

ITEM 8

(This strange rime has never been explicated.)

He learned by going where he had to go,
His men went only when they had to go.

ITEM 9

Collective Bargaining Song

(The poet attributes these fine, intense lyric lines to the hero Charles himself. Scholars now believe that its tortured tone reflects a dismal event late in the hero's career.)

Oh, now I must hear it,
But hardly can bear it,
Aphrodisiac tune
On dreams of the moon,
Rhapsodical jargon
About the Great Bargain,
Where men are so equal.
But oh, what a sequel!
On going collective
You can't be selective;
No credit for merit;
Hoi polloi will inherit
The earth
And its worth;
The poor in spirit
Will wondrously cheer it,
And vote the same wages
For dolts and for sages.
I promise you, buster,
The char and the duster
Will settle your hash, sir,
Your tenure and cash, sir,
The load of your teaching,
The tone of your preaching,
The goal of your reaching,
The range of your snitching,
The scratch of your itching.
The crux of my sermon:
They tried it in German,
And finished a glorious career;
The bargainer banished the seer,
The faculty fell out of gear,

And Heidelberg's naught but a beer.

ITEM 10

Just for a hand on the tiller he left us,
Just for a pennant to raise in his boat.

(This appears to have been a false start on the Coda which follows. Research has discovered that Heilman must have planned a complex parody on some verses by a minor poet of an early century, generally known by the name of Robert Browning. [No one will fail to notice the initials "R. B."] Browning is known to have written a poem called "The Lost Leader," of which the opening lines were as follows:

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a ribbon to stick in his coat.

The now accepted opinion is that Heilman considered this an inferior model and wisely decided to proceed to the Coda on his own.)

Coda

(In the view of scholars, these lines seem clearly to be an integral part of the *Charliad*. However, the proponents of multiple authorship argue that a difference of style indicates the activity of a different poetic hand. The Coda seems to be the work of a much pleasanter, though perhaps less talented, poet. Proponents of single authorship attribute these lines also to Heilman; they take the difficult position that he was now writing in a mellower mood. Others argue that he was never mellow. It is an insoluble problem.)

Charles thought that he was dead of us;
In fact, he was ahead of us,
A mile or two, in rage or laughter,
As we in time came straggling after.
However slow we were to swallow,
Truth is, we never failed to follow.
At times he spoke as special pleader,
But still remained the general leader,
Who found the stuff his men possessed
And then would never let them rest.
A jest, we know, describes his state;
We've truly found him Charles the Great,
Who older boundaries has surpassed
To make a realm rather vast,
Quite civilized and built to last
(Despite our moment's overcast).
The last of my comparisons:
He's weary of the Saracens,
Of drawing out his fighting blades
Against the southern border raids,
And so he seeks a gentler stand,
A sort of France, in Bainbridge land,
Which once upon a time was Indian,
But now is wholly Carolingian.
On Sundays, what a French cuisine!
A breakfast served from morn till e'en
Of broth to win an angel's favor,
So penetrating in its savor,
No solids gross to spoil its merit,
But irresistible in spirit.

He well deserves this quiet France,
Relief from combat's song and dance.
Yet we'll feel never undermanned
If he remains thus close at hand.
Thank heaven it's not in Michigan

That he will sail and fish again,
But just beyond a nearby dock,
Where we in need can always flock,
Knowing he'll take a poopdeck stance
And toss again a verbal lance
To pierce us more than we can bear
And pain us with some new fresh air,
Like Chaucer's student gladly teach
With unrelenting eye and speech.
And though new light we seem to hate,
In time we see like Charles the Great.

The Poet's Modest Plea to his Audience

We beg you, persons, do not curse,
Please don't allege this isn't verse;
But praise it as it quiet flows,
Its triumph is, it isn't prose.